

When to Migrate: The Role of Social Networks in Shaping Migration Timing

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Abstract

How does the strength of social networks influence the timing of migration decisions? This paper argues that the timing of migration is significantly shaped by the strength of a migrant's social network. Drawing on a vignette survey experiment that examines individuals who migrated during key election years—from Mexico to the United States and from Turkey to Germany—I expect to find that migrants embedded in stronger social networks relocated more quickly, as they possessed greater social capital in the form of resources and information. These findings offer important implications for migration literature, particularly in understanding how social capital accelerates migratory responses to political events. By emphasizing when people migrate, not just where, this paper shifts the focus from individual decision-making to the collective, network-based dynamics that influence the timing and coordination of migration.

Introduction

Migration decisions are rarely made in isolation. Instead, they are deeply shaped by the social relationships, networks, and flows of information that surround potential migrants. A key concept for understanding these dynamics is social capital, which Bourdieu (1985) defines as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition.” Social capital has long been recognized as a central driver of migration, particularly in shaping where individuals choose to go. However, comparatively little attention has been paid to when individuals decide to move. Although scholars broadly agree on the importance of social networks and social capital in migration, most existing literature has concentrated on destination outcomes. The role these factors play in shaping the timing of migration remains underexplored, a gap this paper seeks to address.

Understanding the timing of migration is just as critical as understanding where and why it occurs. In 2024 alone, the World Migration Report estimated that there were 281 million international migrants (International Organization for Migration, 2025). In a rapidly changing global landscape, the ability to act quickly can be just as important as the choice of destination. Shifting the focus from understanding migration destinations to analyzing the timing of migration decisions, this paper aims to answer the question: How does the strength of social networks influence the timing of migration decisions?

This paper argues that the timing of migration is significantly influenced by the strength of a migrant’s social network—specifically those rooted in the host country. These networks serve as a vital channel through which migrants access social capital (Jochim & Macková, 2024). Migrants embedded in strong networks – characterized by trust, reciprocity, and tightly-knit relationships – are better positioned to access timely and reliable information and support. This, in turn, allows quicker responses to time-sensitive opportunities or sudden policy changes. In contrast, weaker networks – characterized by loose, fleeting connections – are less effective in transmitting timely, actionable information, often resulting in delayed decision-making resulting in lower levels of social capital. As digital connectivity continues to expand, migrants increasingly are involved in a range of social networks. However, I argue that those engaged in stronger, more cohesive networks are generally more capable of acting quicker in response to migration-related opportunities.

Building on theories of social capital (Bourdieu, 1985; Glanville & Bienenstock, 2009) and migration network theory (Massey et al., 1993), this framework explores how variations in network strength affect not only the migration decision but also when the decision occurs. Rather than viewing migration as the outcome of isolated, individual calculations, I emphasize how the structure and strength of social ties shapes the timing of migration. By analyzing how social capital influences the speed and quality of information transmission within migrant networks, I aim to show that the timing of migration is closely tied to the structure and reliability of the relationships through which migration-related support and knowledge are accessed. In doing so,

this paper highlights the network level as a critical yet underexplored dimension of migration, decision-making. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing a more comprehensive view of migration flows.

To examine the relationship between network strength and the timing of migration, I employ a vignette survey experiment designed to assess how recently relocated migrants from Mexico and Turkey—who moved to the United States and Germany, respectively—were influenced by varying levels of social capital embedded in different types of social networks. Using hypothetical scenarios, the survey assesses how differences in social capital affect individuals' decisions about when to migrate. Specifically, I investigate whether access to strong, cohesive networks accelerates migration by enabling faster decision-making. In the U.S. context, I sample Mexican migrants who arrived during the 2016, 2020, and 2024 presidential election years—periods characterized by intensified immigration debates and shifts in enforcement. For the German case, I focus on Turkish migrants who relocated during or shortly after the 2017, 2021, and 2025 federal elections, which similarly coincided with changes in migration discourse and policy.

As immigration becomes increasingly politicized and anti-immigration rhetoric intensifies worldwide, understanding how the strength of social networks influences the timing of migration decisions is more important than ever. This paper contributes to migration studies by shifting the focus beyond destination choice to also consider when migrants choose to move. While previous literature has emphasized destination selection, this study brings attention to the timing of migration – a factor that can be equally critical in shaping migration outcomes. Understanding the patterns and timing of relocation is essential not only for advancing academic understanding but also for informing responsive and effective policy. The findings of this study have important implications for policymakers, particularly in designing integration strategies and support services that align with the realities of migrant decision-making timelines. These implications will be discussed in the following sentence.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. First, I review existing migration literature, emphasizing the gap concerning the role of social networks in shaping the timing of migration, rather than just the destination. I then present my theoretical framework and outline the empirical strategy used to investigate the relationship between network strength and timing of migrant-decision making. Following an analysis of the main findings, I discuss their broader implications, highlighting the critical role that network strength and social capital play in understanding migration patterns.

Literature Review

Existing migration literature has largely concentrated on the push and pull factors that shape migration flows. On the supply side, scholars emphasize how economic hardship, violence, political instability, and corruption serve as major drivers of out-migration (Carbajal & de Miguel Calvo, 2021; Cerrutti & Parrado, 2015; Urbański, 2022; Auer et al., 2020; Bernini et

al., 2024). More recent studies have added environmental factors such as climate change and ecological degradation to the list of emerging push drivers (Afifi, 2011; Obokata et al., 2014; Millock, 2015). On the demand side, research has focused on the characteristics of destination countries – such as political environments, civil rights protections, and migrant integration policies – that make them attractive to migrants (Fitzgerald et al., 2014; Ferwerda & Gest, 2021; Carbajal & de Miguel Calvo, 2021; Beverelli, 2022). While these studies help explain why and where migration occurs, far less attention has been given to when individuals choose to migrate.

Timing is a critical, yet underexplored dimension of migration decision-making. A small but growing body of work has begun to explore this question. For instance, Holland and Peters (2020) link worsening conditions in origin countries to accelerated migration decisions, and Schewel (2020) provides unique insight into the concept of immobility, arguing that understanding why migrants choose to stay can shed light on the timing and conditions under which the decision to relocate eventually occurs. However, this literature often lacks attention to the mechanisms through which information flows to migrants – and how those mechanisms, particularly social networks, may influence the timing of migration.

Social networks have long been recognized as a core factor in shaping migration patterns (Massey, 1990; Massey et al., 1993; Haug, 2008). A migration network refers to the web of interpersonal relations—often involving family or friends—through which migrants access information and support (Haug, 2008). These networks often provide emotional support, economic assistance, and knowledge to help individuals navigate the migration process (Fitzgerald et al., 2014; Falck et al., 2018; Bernini et al., 2024). Comola and Mendola (2015), as well as Carbajal and de Miguel Calvo (2021), argue that these networks function as pull factors by lowering the costs and risks of migration. However, this literature focuses heavily on how these networks influence the destination of migration, and less on how they shape the timing of migration decisions. Yet the timing of migration is just as critical to understand as the decision of where to relocate.

At the core of these networks is social capital, which scholar Bourdieu (1985) defines as the actual or potential resources available through a durable network of mutual relationships. Migrant networks act as key means through which this capital can be accumulated among migrants. Scholars widely agree that social capital plays a vital role in migration by helping migrants navigate bureaucratic processes, secure housing or employment, and gain access to vital information (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Jochim & Macková, 2024; Manchin & Orazabayev, 2018; Williams et al., 2020). While it is well-established that social capital significantly influences migrant decision-making (Dolfin & Genicot, 2010; Garip & Asad, 2016; Haug, 2008), there remains a need to better understand the specific aspects of social capital that drive migration and the mechanisms through which it does. Less attention has been paid to the mechanisms through which social capital functions—and how variations in network strength might shape the timing of migration decisions.

Despite recognition of the importance of social capital in lowering migration barriers, there remains a notable gap in understanding how variations in the strength of social networks

influence the timing of migration decisions. Specifically, little is known about how quickly information spreads within different types of networks, how migrants interpret that information or resources, and how that affects their ability to act in a timely manner. This study aims to address this gap by shifting the focus from the well-studied questions of why and where migration occurs, to explore when it occurs – and how social capital shapes that timing. By examining the strength of migrant networks as a key mechanism for information transmission and resource mobilization, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the role that social ties play in shaping not just migration outcomes, but the speed of decision-making.

Theory

The timing of migration decisions is often just as critical as the destination itself, particularly in contexts where migrants must respond rapidly to changes in immigration policies, employment opportunities, or socio-political conditions. In this theoretical framework, I build on existing research by shifting focus from where migration occurs to when it occurs, and I argue that the strength of social capital – particularly within social networks based in the host country – is central to understanding this timing.

Scholars Glanville & Bienenstock (2009) identify three core components that characterize social capital: network structure, trust and reciprocity, and the resources that are exchanged within networks. I contend that these components don't just affect whether migration happens but directly influence how quickly it occurs. These migrant networks – specifically those located in the host country – serve as crucial platforms for sharing time-sensitive information and offering support that can determine when a potential migrant decides to act. Strong networks can offer faster access to both information and resources that are critical to reducing uncertainty and facilitating quicker migration decisions.

Engaging in social networks is a core way migrants accumulate social capital (Jochim & Macková, 2024). However, not all networks are equally effective in influencing migration timing. According to Bourdieu (1985), the amount of social capital accessible to an individual is determined by both the number of network connections a migrant can count on as well as the total amount of capital – whether financial, cultural, or human - each member of the network has. Therefore, even if individuals participate in multiple networks of varying strengths, the presence of a strong network significantly enhances their ability to respond rapidly to migration opportunities or policy shifts. In other words, while migrants may have access to both strong and weak networks, I argue those embedded in stronger networks are better positioned to make more timely migration decisions.

According to the network theory outlined by Massey et al. (1993), a migrant's decision-making process is greatly influenced by their embeddedness in social relationships, meaning that potential migrants are often guided by the relationships and resources available within their existing networks. Massey's (1990) cumulative cause theory suggests that migration isn't a one-time event, but rather an ongoing process that builds on prior migration experiences

and knowledge. These relationships impact the accessibility and speed of information exchange, and as networks evolve and expand, the flow of information and resources shift, making migration more accessible and likely over time. Crucially, these dynamics are not just about whether information is available – but how fast it is communicated, received, and acted upon. My theory highlights the dependence of migration on social networks, suggesting that migration is more likely to occur in well-established networks where information is easily accessed and shared.

I argue that the strength of a migrant's social network is critical in understanding the timing of migration. Specifically, strong networks – those characterized by close personal relationships with family members (Garip & Asad, 2016) – facilitate the flow of social capital, enabling quicker responses to time-sensitive information. Trust, as noted by Díaz de León (2023) and Jochim & Macková (2024), plays a critical role in ensuring the credibility and usability of this information. According to Glanville and Bienenstock (2009), social capital cannot exist without some level of trust or reciprocity present. In the context of migration timing, trust is foundational for making sure migrants not only receive information but feel confident enough to act on the information. In contrast, weaker networks – those composed of loose, frequently changing connections rather than traditional tightly-knit communities (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014), often transmit information that is delayed, inconsistent, or perceived as less reliable.

Strong networks also facilitate access to concrete resources, such as financial assistance, formal and informal employment opportunities, and housing options, which can drastically reduce the time needed to prepare for migration and make migrants feel more secure in their decision to relocate (Dolfin & Genicot, 2010; Belabbas et al., 2022). Dolfin and Genicot (2010) and Garip and Asad (2016) note that informational assistance provided by household members has a more significant impact than assistance from the broader community. Furthermore, the presence of social capital within strong networks also offers emotional and material support, reducing the overall uncertainty migrants face, and encouraging quicker decision-making. Migrants with strong social networks are better positioned to adapt, securing resources or finding different pathways for relocation that allow them to migrate more quickly than those who don't have access to such networks.

A faster flow of information and resources enables migrants to quickly assess the viability of migration opportunities and respond to external changes, such as shifts in immigration policies or employment prospects. When information and resources are transmitted more rapidly and reliably through strong social networks, migrants are able to make informed decisions more quickly. This can help reduce the uncertainty and anxiety that often influences the migration process. This reduction in uncertainty not only accelerates the decision-making process but also increases the likelihood of timely action, allowing migrants to act quickly on opportunities. In short, strong host-country-based networks help migrants act faster by delivering both information and material support in a timely fashion. It's important to note that information and resources flow alongside each other—access to one isn't dependent on the other, but both play a key role in expediting migration.

On the other hand, migrants relying primarily on weak networks – like acquaintances or social media connections – often face delays in both information and resources. While some scholars have argued that weak networks can provide access to a broader range of individuals (Belabbas et al., 2022; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Liu, 2013), I contend that the speed and trustworthiness of this information can be compromised, as they don't offer the same social capital available within stronger networks. In fact, work by Dekker et al. (2018) finds that social media information originating from existing social ties is seen as more trustworthy. Weak social networks, however, have a slower information flow due to limited or no levels of social capital, causing information to take longer to reach migrants or possibly be incomplete, resulting in delayed migrant timing decisions. Additionally, these networks are less effective in mobilizing the kind of resources that would accelerate migration decisions, such as financial support or employment opportunities. The lack of immediate assistance and coordination often forces migrants in weak networks to delay their decisions until they can successfully secure the necessary support.

Strong networks also create opportunities for coordination and collective action among migrants. The role of trust and reciprocity within these networks can reduce the risks and costs associated with migration by pooling resources, facilitating group movement, and providing emotional support. These characteristics help ease the burden of migration and can significantly accelerate the decision-making timeline of relocation. Migrants embedded in strong networks are more capable of acting quickly because they can efficiently and effectively mobilize, and count on support both before and after their relocation. Even if migrants in weak networks receive similar information, the lack of coordination within these networks' contrasts with the support and collective action found in strong networks. They lack the infrastructure for coordination, making it harder for individuals to align their decisions with others or confidently navigate rapidly changing environments.

However, while quicker migration decisions can be beneficial – particularly in volatile or transitional periods when opportunities or legal windows may shift rapidly – it is important to acknowledge that strong networks might also lead to strategic delays. Migrants embedded in strong, reliable networks may choose to wait until migration conditions are most favorable because they have confidence that their support system will remain intact. In this sense, strong networks can provide the flexibility and security to delay migration until the timing is optimal. While my theory emphasizes that strong networks generally facilitate faster decisions, they can also empower migrants with the ability to be more strategic about when to move. That said, because this paper focuses on periods of transition in the host country when responsiveness is critical, timely decision-making remains a central concern, and strong networks are key in aiding that responsiveness.

Thus, my theory links social capital directly to the timing of migration decisions. Specifically, I argue that migrants embedded in strong, host-country-based networks – characterized by trust, reciprocity, and resource-sharing – are more likely to facilitate timely migration decisions. These networks facilitate faster and more efficient information transmission

and resources, which in turn reduce uncertainty and enable quicker action for relocation. Weak networks, while they can be expansive, offer slower and less reliable flows of information and resources, resulting in delayed migrant timing decisions. Essentially, the strength of a migrant's social network directly affects the transmission of information and resources, which in turn impacts the timing of their decision-making. This leads me to my hypothesis:

H1: Migrants embedded in strong social networks based in the host country will make migration timing decisions more quickly than those embedded in weak networks

Research Design

To test my hypothesis and explore how social capital within migrant networks influences the timing of migration decisions, I implement a vignette survey experiment. Based on my theory, I hypothesize that migrants embedded in strong, host-country-based networks relocate more quickly due to higher levels of social capital – both informational and material. When embedded in dense, cohesive networks, this social capital plays a critical role not only in determining whether migrants relocate but also when they do so. To empirically evaluate this relationship, I adopt Kinne's (2024) structural approach, which emphasizes how patterns of connectivity – specifically third-party ties – shape cooperative outcomes. I extend this logic to migrant networks, theorizing that network structure facilitates or delays migration by shaping access to timely, trusted support.

This study focuses on two well-established migration corridors: Mexico to the United States and Turkey to Germany. Both reflect longstanding migration patterns and are ideal for examining how social networks in destination countries influence successive waves of migration, consistent with Massey et al.'s (1993) network theory. These corridors not only reflect high-volume, long-standing migration patterns but also offer variation in political context and policy environments, making them especially valuable for assessing how social capital operates across different institutional and cultural sites. Surveying migrants from these specific migration corridors provides a unique opportunity to examine how the strength of social networks influences the timing of migration.

To understand how social networks affect the timing of migration, the survey targets migrants who relocated during or shortly after key political transitions within the host countries of the United States and Germany. For the U.S., I sample migrants who arrived during the 2016, 2020, and 2024 U.S. election years. These are periods marked by heightened immigration policy debates and significant shifts in enforcement and migration rhetoric. Similarly, for Germany, I sample Turkish migrants who relocated during or following the 2017, 2021, or 2025 federal elections. These years represent critical moments when external changes could have pressured migrants to act more swiftly. By anchoring the study in these political periods, I am able to evaluate whether migrants embedded in stronger networks were able to respond more quickly to

shifts in policy or environmental changes – an important test of how social capital interacts with these time-sensitive decisions.

The survey will be distributed online to a sample of migrants who relocated within the past two years, focusing on those who moved during the political windows outlined above. This group was selected because their decision-making process is still recent enough to recall with accuracy, while far enough removed to allow for reflection on the influences behind their move. Survey participants will be anonymous and must be 18 years or older, originally from Mexico or Turkey, and currently residing in the United States or Germany, respectively. To address concerns about self-selection bias and data quality, I will utilize stratified sampling to ensure representations across age, gender, and socioeconomic status. While internet-based surveys may underrepresent migrants with limited internet access, stratification will help reduce potential bias and increase generalizability. This approach enables me to capture not only the act of migrating but also the temporal dynamics of decision-making, which are often overlooked in traditional migration studies that tend to focus solely on outcomes like destination. Targeting migrants who relocated during these political periods allows me to assess whether network strength helps migrants act more swiftly in response to policy shifts.

The dependent variable in this study is migration timing, measured as the time elapsed between when a respondent first seriously considered migration and to the actual relocation. To capture this, I will ask respondents open-ended questions such as, “When did you first begin considering migration seriously?” and “On what date did you relocate?” The number of days or weeks between these dates will be used as a continuous measure of decision-making speed. This provides a nuanced understanding of how quickly migrants move from contemplation to action.

The independent variable is network strength, conceptualized as a structural property of the social networks’ migrants are embedded in. Drawing from Kinne (2024), I define network strength using two key structural features: network density (how interconnected a network is) and the presence of transitive triads (when two people in a network become connected through a mutual contact). A network’s structural features – meaning its density and occurrence of transitive triads– reflect the degree to which migrants are embedded in cohesive, supportive networks, and serve as proxies for the amount of social capital, in the form of trust, coordination, information, and resources, available to them. My theory posits that migrants embedded in denser, more transitive networks will relocate more quickly due to faster and more reliable access to the tools necessary for migration.

Using a vignette-based survey experiment enables me to test the impact of network strength on migration timing. This approach allows me to simulate various network conditions through hypothetical scenarios. I present respondents with a series of randomized, hypothetical situations in which they are embedded in host-country networks of differing structural configurations. The key features that vary across vignettes are network density and the presence or absence of transitive triads. For example, in a high-density/high-transitivity scenario, all network members are connected and coordinate regularly; in a low-density/low-transitivity scenario, the migrants receive support from sources that aren’t connected to each other and don’t

coordinate. After each scenario, participants will be asked how quickly they would migrate in that situation, using a five-point Likert scale of urgency and a categorical time frame (e.g., “within one month”, “within six months” etc.). This outcome measure is used to approximate migration timing, capturing how perceived urgency varies depending on the structural design of available network support.

This allows me to directly test whether higher structural network strength leads to greater urgency and shorter hypothetical migration timelines. By varying network attributes across different hypothetical scenarios, I can isolate their causal impact on migration timing. Though the scenarios are hypothetical, they are grounded in realistic dynamics observed in migrant communities. I will analyze the data using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, testing how differences in structural conditions influence migration urgency. Although the dependent variable is based on survey responses, I treat it as a continuous measure of migration timing, making OLS an appropriate choice for estimating the average effects of different network conditions.

To address possible endogeneity concerns, I will include individual-level control variables including age, gender, education level, and marital status. These factors can influence the timing of migration, which is why it is important to isolate their effect when looking at network strength. Furthermore, I will control for socioeconomic status (Auer et al., 2020), educational background (Holland & Peters, 2020), political stability and the absence of violence and terrorism (Auer et al., 2020), and proximity to migration destinations (Fitzgerald, 2014). These variables are known to influence both the decision to migrate and the timing of that migration. Controlling for these variables helps to ensure that the results are not confounded by factors external to network dynamics. Since this study specifically focuses on how social network strength influences migration behavior, accounting for these background variables is critical to accurately capture the causal mechanisms.

By embedding hypothetical network scenarios into an experimental survey, this study offers a novel approach to understanding how the structure and strength of migrant networks shape not just where migrants go, but when they choose to go. It bridges the social capital and migration literature with experimental methods, applying Kinne’s structural logic to real-world migration behavior. In doing so, it offers important insights into how migrants respond to external shocks and shifting opportunities, and how the networks they rely on can compress or extend the decision-making timeline.

Implications and Conclusion

This paper investigates how the strength of migrants’ social networks influences not only whether and where people migrate, but also when they choose to relocate. Theoretically, I argue that strong host-country-based networks – characterized by trust, reciprocity, and coordination – play a crucial role in accelerating migration timing by facilitating the fast and reliable transmission of both information and resources. Based on this framework and my empirical design, I would expect to find that migrants embedded in strong, cohesive networks relocate

more quickly than those in weak or fragmented ones. These networks accelerate migration timing by reducing uncertainty, providing timely and reliable information, and mobilizing resources such as housing, employment opportunities, or financial support. Understanding how different levels of social capital influence the timing of migration provides a more comprehensive view of migrant-decision making. Migration is not just a matter of where and why, but also when. This timing can be extremely important in shaping migrant outcomes, especially during key periods of rapid political, economic, or environmental change.

This study makes several key contributions to migration literature. First, it extends social capital theory and migration network theory by emphasizing timing as a critical dimension of migration behavior. While past work has highlighted that social ties help facilitate migration, I look at how the specific structure and quality of those ties determine not just migration feasibility, but the speed of that decision in this paper. Additionally, by using a vignette-based survey experiment, this study provides a unique approach to measuring hypothetical responses to realistic, time-sensitive migration conditions. This helps capture both the structural network dynamics and decision-making urgency that come with varying levels of social capital. Lastly, by analyzing migration decisions within the context of recent political transitions (e.g., U.S. and German election years), this paper highlights the reality that migrants often operate under pressure and must be able to respond quickly to shifting external conditions. Timing, in these cases, is often an intentional response that is either expedited or hindered by network-based social capital access. As immigration policy and rhetoric continue to be greatly debated, expanding our theoretical understanding of migration timing is crucial for better understanding how migrants respond to shifting conditions.

From a policy perspective, the proposed findings carry several important implications. First, in terms of managing migration flows and decision-making processes, policymakers must recognize that timely migration decisions are not solely individual but instead are heavily influenced by the social networks within which migrants are embedded. Therefore, interventions aimed at improving migration outcomes must account for how migrants' access to social networks, specifically strong, coordinated networks, affects their ability to act quickly and efficiently in response to opportunities or policy changes. Additionally, organizations that support migrants play a crucial role in helping to foster these networks. By encouraging community-building, facilitating mentoring programs, and helping disseminate accurate and timely information through established and trusted social ties, these organizations can help foster robust, trust-based networks that allow for quicker and more informed migration decisions. For programs that are designed to enhance network cohesion, they can indirectly help accelerate migration processes, ensuring that migrants are well-informed and able to act more swiftly when needed.

While this study focuses primarily on voluntary migration, the insights gained may also be relevant to forced migration contexts. In situations of sudden shifts in migration policy or political upheaval, migrants embedded in strong networks are better positioned to respond quickly and access better outcomes. The findings from this paper can guide policymakers in

identifying groups with weaker social ties who may face delays in their migration processes. By recognizing these weaknesses, resources can be allocated more equitably and proactively to ensure more timely and safe migration for all migrants.

Importantly, this paper challenges the dominant individualistic framing of migrant-decision making by highlighting the collective nature of network-based influence. Migrants often make decisions not in isolation but as members of tightly connected communities where information and resources are shared. By focusing on the role of social networks, this study highlights how group-level dynamics, particularly the strength and cohesion of these networks, serve as a key determinant of migration timing. This reframing contributes to a growing body of literature that views migration not as a purely individual decision, but as a socially embedded process that is shaped by access to this collective dynamic.

In conclusion, this paper shifts the traditional migration lens from destination selection to migration timing. As global migration flows continue to increase, understanding the timing behind migration is more critical than ever. I provide a deeper understanding of how migrants respond to migration-related opportunities and what influences the timing of relocation. This paper highlights the central role of network strength and social capital in shaping not only whether migration occurs but how fast it does. By showing that the timing of migration is a function of the structure and quality of migrants' social network, this research helps lay the groundwork for important future migration studies and policies that engage with the lived realities that influence migrant-decision making. Future research could explore how the strength of social networks varies across different migrant communities and how specific types of social capital within these networks contribute to migration timing.

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